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Special General Council Meeting held on Casino Issues

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Menominee Nation News

In January, a motion was made to hold a special general council meeting specifically to discuss casino issues. That meeting took place on Saturday, May 3, 2003, at the Menominee Casino.

Richie Plass was elected as Chairman for the meeting while Daryl O’Katchikum served as the Sergeant-at-arms. Eileen Schultz and Edwin Wilber were elected as tellers for the meeting.

James Reiter, General Manager, spoke to the crowd of about 100 people about various casino issues. Turnover and absenteeism costs an average of \$12,000 per employee. Yearly this cost adds up to \$5.1 million. The cost is high as a new investigation and gaming license must be approved, training of the new employee, and costs of insurance start-up, as well as the administrative costs of firing and hiring.

Insurance costs for employees was a major topic of discussion. Average insurance costs are \$8,000 per person per year. The Casino now has approximately 320 employees with insurance benefits. The insurance rates have gone up 34% last year and are expected to rise 15-25% again this year.

Although insurance rates are high, a tribal member suggested that the turnover rate would go down if people were receiving full time positions with benefits. Mr. Reiter responded that administration is looking at part-time vs. full-time employment for overall costs to the Casino.

Mary Beth Pecore, Training Supervisor, stated that 602 employees have undergone guest services training since she began her position in November. She has scheduled a 8-week supervision course at the College of the Menominee Nation. Employees will receive three credits



C. Caldwell/MNN

Casino issues and the Menominee Gaming Compact were the main topics of discussion at the Special General Council meeting which was held in the Ada Deer Room at the Menominee Casino. Menominee Tribal Chairman, Joan Delabreau is shown here discussing some issues with the audience.

for this course which will apply supervision theory and practice to the Casino.

Once a month all service managers will be required to work 4 hours on a weekend to greet guests and identify areas for more training or streamlining.

An issue from the previous general council was the recommendation to return to a Gaming Board of Directors. The Governmental Affairs Committee agreed and immediately dropped the number of legislators on the existing Gaming Ad Hoc Committee from 5 to 4 legislators. The new gaming board will be made up of 2 legislators and 3 committee members. The time frame for this is unclear as various tribal ordinances and amendments will have to be rewritten or a new comprehensive ordinance will have to be passed to

allow for this change.

Reiter reported that the Casino is using about 47% Valley Co. machines which are outdated. The cost for 100 new machines will be about \$1 million dollars.

A new “ticket in- ticket out” procedure will be implemented on 200 of the slot machines. This will allow people to cash out and receive a ticket for credits which can be used in other ticket machines or redeemed at the cashier.

Joan Delabreau, Menominee Tribal Chairperson, announced that the new gaming compact has been signed with Governor Doyle. The compact has been forwarded to the BIA in Washington, which has 45 days to approve it. At that time, the Menominee Tribal Legislature will report all the details of the compact to tribal members.

The scope of games allowed will be expanded to include poker, roulette, and craps. The Casino is actively recruiting experienced table games operators.

The blackjack dealers will learn these new games and other people will be hired and trained. The cost of training table games operators on roulette, craps, and poker will be \$80,000. Concern that Menominee Casino trains many people who leave for employment elsewhere was discussed. Reiter stated that an agreement with the table games operators will be signed, requiring the employee to commit to the Menominee Casino for one year or repay the cost of their portion of training.

See Casino pg.14

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Inside this issue

Legislative Corner	2	Vital Stats	12
Comments	3	Health	13
Language	3	Community	14-16, 19
Education	4-7, 12	Legislative Minutes	17-18
Happy Ads	9	Misd Minutes	18

2003 MISD Graduates 10-11